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ABSTRACT

The performance-based concept of teacher certification signifies that the collection of evidence verifying the candidate's ability to perform as a teacher is a central function in the bureaucratic process of teacher certification. Such certification is needed because it makes sense, the public will demand it, and it will strengthen the profession of teaching. The Florida plan is designed to move certification practices gradually but steadily along a continuum toward more performance-based certification with traditional components replaced by new ones as they become available. It will depend on the success of individuals and institutions to develop and implement new techniques for training personnel and evaluating their performance. Few changes in legal regulations or state administration of certification are needed, but some changes in procedures for program approval have been required. Activities to encourage movement toward performance-based certification include: 1) development of broad teacher education guidelines which can be used in designing preservice and inservice programs for state approval and which provide alternatives to the course-by-course certification regulations, and 2) a plan coordinated at the state level for designing and disseminating individualized teacher education modules which employ a performance based approach to training personnel in specific skills or knowledge identified by professional educators and which can be adapted to ongoing preservice and inservice programs. (JS)

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PERFORMANCE-BASED TEACHER CERTIFICATION: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

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State of Florida
Department of Education
Floyd T. Christian, Commissioner
August 3, 1970

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This paper was prepared by K. Fred Daniel, Associate for Planning and Coordination, Florida Department of Education, in conjunction with a training program for teacher education leaders. The training program was held in Miami Beach, Florida on May 19-22, 1970. It was conducted by the Florida Department of Education in cooperation with the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development, U. S. Office of Education. Participants in the training program were teacher education leaders from eleven states, seven professional organizations, and the U. S. Office of Education. The purpose of the training program was to develop plans for moving toward performance-based teacher certification.

PERFORMANCE-BASED TEACHER CERTIFICATION: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

It is much easier to defend the need for performance-based teacher certification than it is to provide a precise definition of the concept. When one prominent teacher educator learned that the Florida Department of Education was planning to conduct a training program dealing with performance-based teacher certification, he responded cryptically. "It sounds like a good idea if you can figure out what it is."

In trying to define "what it is," it may be useful to consider the two parts of the concept--"performance-based" and "teacher certification"--separately. Teacher certification is, of course, the process whereby a state or other governmental unit identifies those persons who are eligible for employment as teachers. (The term teacher is being used broadly here to include counselors, administrators, and any other professional personnel in education for whom certification might be required.) The assumption underlying teacher certification is that it is possible to devise a bureaucratic process which will distinguish those persons who are qualified to perform as teachers in public schools from those persons who are probably not so qualified. As presently constituted, that bureaucratic process is carried out by reviewing transcripts to verify that college courses with certain specified titles have been completed and that appropriate degrees have been awarded.

The "performance-based" part of the concept signifies that the collection of evidence verifying the candidate's ability to perform as a teacher is a central function in the bureaucratic process of teacher certification. The addition of "performance-based" as a qualifier to "teacher certification" specifies the kind of evidence which is most appropriate for identifying those persons who

should be considered qualified to perform as teachers in public schools. Such evidence would relate directly to teaching performance.

It is apparent that no clear dichotomy exists between "performance-based teacher certification" and "non-performance-based teacher certification." It is more appropriate to perceive a continuum with demonstrated teaching performance at one end and characteristics which can be identified outside the teaching situation (e.g.) intelligence tests scores, personality traits, knowledge of subject matter) at the other. A teacher certification process which might be located at the center of the continuum would rely equally on performance factors and non-performance factors. Teacher certification processes located at either end of the continuum would rely on performance factors exclusively or on non-performance factors exclusively. It is the position of persons advocating performance-based teacher certification--including this writer--that teacher certification practices should move toward the performance-based end of the continuum. There is not agreement, however, as to how far such movements should go and how fast such movements should proceed.

Why do we need it?

Performance-based teacher certification is needed simply because it makes sense. It has long been obvious to laymen and to professionals that a demonstrated ability to teach is the best evidence of teaching ability. Therefore, since teacher certification is supposed to identify those eligible to be employed as teachers, the teacher certification process should rely heavily on evidence which verifies the ability of candidates to perform as teachers.

Laymen are more comfortable arguing for a new approach to teacher certification than are most professional educators. A layman will not hesitate

to cite cases of persons who would make "wonderful teachers" but who cannot be employed because they do not meet technical requirements imposed through state certification regulations.

The past reluctance of many professionals to endorse changes in teacher certification practices has not been due to their naivete regarding teaching. Instead, it has been due to uncertainties--even misgivings--about teacher evaluation. Professionals have been convinced that procedures for evaluating teaching performance which could be used reliably and safely in a bureaucratic process of teacher certification simply were not available. Research studies dealing with teacher effectiveness number in the thousands. Yet, findings with practical applicability are meager. Therefore, professional educators and state officials have been willing to defend present certification practices.

Today, however, many professional educators are aggressively seeking new approaches to teacher certification. (e.g., Alvin Lierheimer's papers, "Give Up the Ship" and "An Anchor to Windward"). Recent pressures for credibility--and more recently, accountability--have stimulated a quest for ways to base teacher certification more directly on a demonstrated ability to teach.

The adaptation of performance-based approaches to teacher certification would enhance the credibility of the certification process and strengthen teaching as a profession. If it were possible to describe to the public the skills and knowledge which teaching candidates were required to demonstrate and if it were also clear that these are skills and knowledge which are not normally possessed by persons who are not prepared to teach, public confidence in the profession of teaching would be greatly enhanced. Needless to say, this would also have a salutary effect on the self-image of teachers.

To summarize, performance-based teacher certification is needed for three reasons: (1) Because it makes sense, (2) because the public will demand it, and (3) because it will strengthen the profession of teaching.

How do we get it?

While the title of this paper asks only two questions about performance-based teacher certification--"What is it?" and "Why do we need it?"-- it appears useful to extend the discussion with some remarks on strategies for moving toward performance-based teacher certification. The following is a description of what might be deemed "the Florida plan." It is not offered as a model but as an example of one state's approach.

The Florida approach has the following characteristics:

1. It is designed to move teacher certification practices toward the performance-based end of the continuum. Such movement will be gradual, but steady. It is not a matter of throwing out an old system and putting in a new system. Instead, it is a planned evolution.
2. The success of the plan will depend upon the success of individuals and institutions within the state to develop and implement new techniques for training personnel and evaluating their performance. Institutions involved include local school districts, professional organizations, colleges, and universities. Providing assistance to all of these institutions is an integral part of the plan.
3. The starting point for developing evaluation systems and training systems is to identify specific teaching skills and knowledge judged by professional educators to be relevant. Training procedures for each skill or unit of knowledge are developed separately.

Evaluation procedures are coordinated with each training component or module. Thereafter, comprehensive performance-based training and evaluation programs are developed piece by piece, with traditional components being replaced by performance-based components as the latter become available.

Legal Bases

Florida has been moving slowly on changing State laws or regulations. The changes which have taken place have been discussed thoroughly in the State Teacher Education Adivsory Council--the official agency for advising the State Board of Education on matters related to teacher education and certification. Few changes have been necessary.

Since state certification regulations provide for an approved program approach to teacher certification, no changes in those regulations were necessary in order to move toward performance-based teacher certification. The State Board of Education Regulations regarding the approval of teacher education programs in higher institutions do not prohibit approval of institutional programs which use performance criteria, rather than course credits, for recommending candidates. Thus, no changes in regulations were needed, although some changes in procedures for administering program approval have been required. However, after a year's experience using new administrative procedures with the established regulations, the Teacher Education Advisory Council has recommended that the regulations be written to encourage (rather than simply to permit) performance-based approaches to teacher education. The Council has appointed a task force to draft recommended changes in regulations.

While policies relating to preservice teacher education and initial certification required little modification, major changes were necessary in legal guidelines for inservice teacher education. This began with a change

in policy which was enacted by the Florida Legislature. Traditionally, the continued professional development of the teacher has been the responsibility of the teacher himself. However, since local boards of education are responsible for the quality of education, the legislature placed the responsibility for inservice education with those boards. It was felt that the boards must provide for the inservice education of teachers in order to maintain the quality of education in a changing society. To implement this policy, the State Board of Education adopted regulations which provide for the approval of inservice teacher education programs which are conducted by local school districts. Hence, after completing a self-study and after a visit by an evaluation committee, a local school district may secure approval of its in-service education program. Such approval allows teachers to extend (i.e., renew) their certificates without additional college work.

As yet, no regulations have been enacted allowing or encouraging agencies other than school districts and accredited colleges to conduct teacher education programs. Also, teacher education programs conducted by local school districts are restricted to the inservice level. However, joint programs are encouraged, although legal provisions have not been enacted to make agencies jointly responsible for the quality of their graduates.

Encouraging and Assisting

The purpose of the legal enactments described above was primarily to make performance-based teacher education and teacher certification possible. Thus far, the state of Florida has not attempted to use statutes and regulations as the wedge for changing teacher education and teacher certification. The wedge has been the progressive thinking of teacher education leaders throughout the state. The Teacher Education Adivsory Council has served as the forum for discussing their

ideas. However, this thinking has been supported by activities initiated to support and encourage the movement toward performance-based teacher certification. These activities are of three types: (1) the development of broad teacher education guidelines which can be used in designing preservice and inservice teacher education programs for state approval and which provide alternatives to the course-by-course teacher certification regulations. (2) A plan coordinated at the state level by the Department of Education for designing and disseminating individualized teacher education modules which employ a performance-based approach to training personnel in specific skills or knowledge identified by professional educators and which can be adapted into ongoing preservice and inservice teacher education programs. (3) Managing whatever funds become available so that they support the above two activities.

The development of teacher education guidelines is supervised by the State Teacher Education Advisory Council. Eventually, these guidelines will be available in all teacher education areas. They will be used by persons designing teacher education programs and also by persons evaluating those teacher education programs. The following criteria have been adopted for use by the task forces which are developing guidelines:

(1) They must cite the types of behaviors in children which are expected to be fostered through the services of the personnel participating in the teacher education program.

(2) They must describe the competencies needed by teachers in order to provide the desired services.

(3) They must describe the teacher education experiences needed to develop the desired competencies.

(4) They must present criteria for selecting candidates for the teacher education program.

(5) They must include a plan for following up persons who have completed the program to determine their effectiveness on the job.

(6) They must be applicable to both preservice and inservice teacher education programs.

The job of developing the needed procedures and materials--the technology--for performance-based teacher education is gargantuan. The experience of the U.S. Office of Education and the participating institutions which developed the nine elementary models provides ample evidence of this fact. The State of Florida has taken the position that performance-based teacher certification cannot be implemented satisfactorily until the needed teacher training technology is available. The State has set out to develop this technology piece by piece, using whatever resources might be available. Thus, a variety of projects carried out with EPDA support and with support from other sources have produced individualized teacher training modules. These modules have been developed to include the following elements:

(1) A set of objectives which describes fully what the trainee will be able to do after successfully completing the module.

(2) Appropriate procedures and materials for accomplishing each of the module objectives. These procedures include practice activities with feedback to the trainee.

(3) Evaluation exercies or activities which can be used to determine when the trainee has accomplished the module objectives.

Many of the modules developed have been tested in preservice and in-service teacher training settings. One dissemination project was designed to train resource persons from throughout the state to supervise the use of fifty-three such modules.

What About the Administration of Teacher Certification?

The administration of a performance-based approach to teacher certification in Florida will involve reviewing transcripts (or other official records) to verify that the teaching candidates have mastered the needed skills and knowledge for teaching. Administratively, this is no different than the procedure which is followed now, whereby certification analysts either (a) review transcripts to see that candidates have completed approved programs or (b) conduct course by course analyses to see that they have completed the proper courses. Thus, from the standpoint of the certification administrator, performance-based teacher certification will require little change in present practices. In fact, the anticipated Florida system will simplify the operation of certification. When a performance-based approach is used exclusively, all acceptable applications for certification must indicate that the candidate has completed an approved program. Thus, a certification analyst will not conduct course by course analyses.

For the candidate, the process of meeting certification requirements will be more difficult for some and less difficult for others. It will be necessary for the candidate to submit to the teacher certification office an official statement (e.g., transcript) indicating that he has completed (or has been "checked out" in) an approved program. It will not be possible for him to submit several transcripts showing that he has certain courses at one institution, certain courses at another institution, and certain courses at a third institution. Instead, he must go to one institution, or school district (or other agency offering an approved teacher education program) and complete the performance evaluations for all of the competencies included in the approved program. If he has mastered all the necessary skills and knowledge, he will receive a recommendation for certification. If there are parts of the program in which he is deficient, he will then complete those portions of the training program.

Likewise, native candidates in a preservice program will follow the same procedure. If they have already mastered certain skills or knowledge that are included in the program, it will not be necessary to complete the training associated with that portion of the program.

It is apparent that the key to the effective administration of a state-wide performance-based teacher certification system resides in an effective system for program approval. A performance-based system places greater responsibility on the teacher training agency. Thus, the program approval operation must have built-in procedures for accountability on the part of teacher training agencies. There must be a way to verify the quality of the performance of the graduates. While initial program approval may be on the basis of professional judgment regarding the content and procedures employed in the program, continued approval must be based on the proven performance of those who have completed the program.